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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF PUBLIC SAFETY



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MEMA ADVISES CAUTION IN HOT WEATHER

FRAMINGHAM, MA – With extremely hot weather predicted over the next few days, the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is advising people to be cautious in the expected extreme heat, and is offering some tips to help keep cool and safe.

“A few common sense measures can reduce heat-related problems, especially for the elderly, the very young and people with respiratory ailments who are more susceptible to the effects of high temperatures,” said MEMA Director Cristine McCombs.

Here are some tips to follow during hot, humid weather:

- Slow down, avoid strenuous activity. Do not try to do too much on a hot day.
- Wear lightweight, loose-fitting, light-colored clothing. Light colors will reflect heat and sunlight and help maintain normal body temperature. Protect your face with a wide-brimmed hat.
- Drink plenty of water regularly and often, even if you do not feel thirsty.
- Limit intake of alcoholic beverages. They can actually dehydrate your body.
- Eat well-balanced, light, regular meals. Avoid high protein foods that increase metabolic heat.
- Stay indoors as much as possible.
- If you do not have air conditioning, stay on your lowest floor, out of the sun. Electric fans do not cool the air, but they do help evaporate sweat, which cools your body.
- Go to a place where you can get relief from the heat, such as air conditioned schools, libraries, theaters and other community facilities that may offer refuge during the warmest times of the day.
- Cover windows that receive morning or afternoon sun with drapes, shades, awnings or louvers. Outdoor awnings or louvers can reduce the heat that enters a home by up to 80%.
- Avoid too much sunshine. Sunburn slows the skin's ability to cool itself. If you are outside, use sunscreen lotion with a high SPF (Sun Protection Factor) rating.
- Never leave children or pets alone in a closed vehicle.
- Check on family, friends and neighbors.

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In normal weather, the body's internal thermostat produces perspiration that evaporates and cools the body. However, in extreme heat and high humidity, evaporation is slowed and the body must work extra hard to maintain normal temperature. Following these recommendations can prevent heat cramps, heat exhaustion and heat stroke.

- Heat Cramps are muscular pains and spasms due to heavy exertion. They usually involve the abdominal muscles or legs and are caused by loss of water due to heavy sweating. Treatment includes getting the person to a cooler place to rest in a comfortable position. Give the person a half glass of cool water every fifteen minutes.
- Heat Exhaustion typically occurs when people over-exert themselves in a warm, humid place where body fluids are lost through heavy sweating. Blood flow to the skin increases, causing blood flow to vital organs to decrease, resulting in a form of mild shock. The skin will be cool and moist, appearing either pale or flushed. The victim may have headache and/or experience nausea. There may also be dizziness. It is important to treat the victim promptly, so the condition does not intensify into Heat Stroke. Get the person to a cooler place. Remove or loosen tight clothing and apply cool, wet cloths, such as towels or sheets. If the person is conscious, supply a half glass of cool water every fifteen minutes, making sure the person drinks slowly. Let the person rest in a comfortable position, and watch carefully for changes in his or her condition.
- Heat Stroke is the most serious heat emergency. It is life threatening. The victim's temperature control system, which produces sweating to cool the body, shuts down. The body temperature can rise so high that brain damage and death may result if the body is not cooled quickly. The victim will have hot, red skin, with changes of consciousness. Their pulse will be rapid, but weak and they will experience rapid, shallow breathing. Body temperature can rise to 105F. If the person was sweating from heavy work or exercise, skin may be wet; otherwise it will feel dry. A person suffering from Heat Stroke needs immediate assistance. Call 911 and move the person to a cooler place. Immerse in a cool bath or wrap in wet sheets. Watch for breathing problems. Keep the person lying down and continue to cool the body any way you can. If the victim refuses water, is vomiting, or there are changes in the level of consciousness, do not give anything to eat or drink.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) is the state agency responsible for coordinating federal, state, local, voluntary and private resources during emergencies and disasters in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MEMA provides leadership to: develop plans for effective response to all hazards, disasters or threats; train emergency personnel to protect the public; provide information to the citizenry; and assist individuals, families, businesses and communities to mitigate against, prepare for, and respond to and recover from emergencies, both natural and man made. For additional information about MEMA go to www.mass.gov/mema.